

1: Holmberg--49 [2]  
116, 352, 562, 595

(1941-42) 1950

Siriono

"Family life centers not in a separate dwelling but around the hammocks of the husband and wife, which are hung in the communal dwelling of the band. Each monogamous family generally occupies two hammocks; one is for the man and the other for his wife and children. In polygynous families the wives occupy separate hammocks, which are placed with reference to the hammock of the husband according to their status in the family hierarchy. The first wife usually occupies the position to the right of the husband; the second, to the left; the third, at his head; the fourth, at his feet. Between these hammocks lie the family hearths or fires upon which the cooking is done. Since the distance between the hammocks is seldom greater than 3 feet, a nuclear family, if monogamous, rarely occupies a space greater than 8 feet square. Within this hang the calabashes of water, the baskets of food, and all other family possessions."

"In polygynous families the first wife—generally the one to whom the man has been married the longest—is dominant over all other wives. While considerable economic cooperation takes place between cowives in a polygynous family, more work is done by the secondary wives than by the first wife. The former, for instance, are always required to do the menial tasks, such as bringing in firewood and water. The first wife, moreover, is privileged to distribute her husband's game, she usually gets the first choice (after the husband) of food, and it is usually her son who succeeds his deceased father if the latter was a chief. Furthermore, it is at the hearth of the first wife that the husband generally eats. The secondary wives maintain hearths of their own where they cook for themselves and their children."

"A man enjoys sex rights with all of his wives, but they are not necessarily exercised in any prescribed manner such as by rotating from one wife to another or by concentrating principally on the first wife. In sororal unions the kinship tie between cowives doubtless does much to mitigate friction that might otherwise arise between them, but in non-sororal plural marriages sexual jealousy between cowives is sometimes intense. Since food and sex go hand in hand in Siriono society—and there is a scarcity of the former—the wives with whom the husband most frequently has sex relations are also the ones who generally get the most to eat. Consequently, cowives frequently vie with one another for the sexual favors of their husband. This sometimes leads to bitter fights and quarrels. If, for instance, a first wife is [50] growing old and is receiving less and less attention from her husband as regards both food and sex, she frequently displaces the aggression she feels for him, but cannot express directly, to a younger wife who is enjoying his favors at the moment. Such outbursts of emotion sometimes culminate in bitter fights, the women tearing up each other's hammocks and striking each other with digging sticks and spindles. An aging first wife generally maintains her dominance in the family for a while, but as her husband pays less and less attention to her, she gradually resigns herself to a secondary role in the household. She continues to cling to her economic rights, however, as long as she possibly can, and these are usually maintained longer than her sexual dominance.)

- A man generally takes no part in the fights that break out between his wives; indeed he

1: Holmberg--49-50  
116, 152, 595, 578

(1941-42) 1950

Siriono-2

is usually away on the hunt when they occur. Only if they occur too frequently or become too violent does the husband interfere. Under these conditions he may threaten with divorce the wife standing lower in his favor, in order to keep peace in the family."

1: Holmberg--58-59  
116, 554, 595, 831

(1941-42) 1950

Siriono

"Several wives and numerous children are the principal status marks of a man. Similarly, to be married to a man who is a good hunter and to have several children are the most important status marks of a woman. Plural wives not only mark a man as a good hunter but as a virile sex partner as well. Men boast a great deal about their sexual prowess, as well as their hunting prowess, and in cases where they are married to [59] several wives they are careful to see that only allowable sex partners have any relations with them. Consequently, when overnight trips are made into the forest, a man generally takes all of his wives with him."

1: Holmberg--59 [4]  
116, 643, 595

(1941-42) 1950

Siriono

"The prerogatives of chieftainship are few. Although the title ererékwa is reserved by the men for a chief, if one asks a woman, 'Who is your ererékwa?' she will invariably reply, 'My husband.' The principal privilege of a chief, if it could be called such, is that it is his right to occupy, with his immediate family, the center of the house. Like any other man he must make his bows and arrows, his tools; he must hunt, fish, collect, and plant gardens. He makes suggestions as to migrations, hunting trips, etc., but these are not always followed by his tribesmen. As a mark of status, however, a chief always possesses more than one wife."

"Polygyny is allowed, and sororal polygyny is preferred. Four of the fourteen marriages in the band of Eantádu were plural marriages, and three of these were sororal unions. Only in one instance was a man married to as many as five wives. Three of these were sisters, while the other two were parallel cousins (classificatory sisters) of these. This man was not a chief but a person of considerable maturity and distinction, being about the best hunter in the band. The chief, however, had three wives, two of whom were sisters, while the third he had [83] inherited from his younger brother who died. One of the chief's other brothers also had two wives who were sisters. In the other polygynous union, the man had inherited his second wife from his mother's brother who had died and left no other brothers to whom she could pass. On the whole, plural marriages tend to occur among the chiefs and the better hunters, who are people of the highest status."

2: Holmberg--187  
116, 152, 578, 595, 837

(1941-42) 1946

Siriono

"Fights and quarrels over sex are common but occur less often than fights over food. As has already been mentioned, such quarrels arise largely as a result of too frequent intercourse with a potential spouse to the neglect of the actual spouse; this is really what adultery amounts to among the Siriono. However much men are chided by their wives for deceiving them sexually, this seems to have little effect on their behavior, for they are constantly on the alert for a chance to seduce a potential wife with whom they have not had sexual relations, or to carry on an affair with a yukwáki (young girl) who has passed through the rites of puberty. In plural marriages, however, I rarely noted pronounced sexual jealousy between the wives, possibly because most plural marriages are of the sororal polygynous type."